

REFERENCE

22 October 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing Program on Vietnam

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1. SUMMARY: Officers from divisions and offices concerned attended a meeting on 21 October to discuss the establishment of a briefing program on Vietnam. They reviewed a preliminary VAS paper which considered the need for such a program and outlined a possible schedule for purposes of discussion and illustration. The consensus of the group was that (1) there is an immediate need for a formalized briefing program on Vietnam for all personnel being assigned to Saigon Station, (2) the program should be sponsored by FIB and conducted by OTR, and (3) a preliminary staff paper should be forwarded to FE Division for its consideration with the recommendation that a briefing program be developed and initiated.

2. Officers attending the meeting sponsored by VAS were:



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3. The reasons for recommending a Headquarters briefing for personnel assigned to the Saigon Station were discussed at some length. In essence, these reasons include: (1) The fact that the station complement is to be increased rapidly in quantum jumps; about [redacted] employees will be departing for Saigon each month between now and the Spring of 1966. (2) Briefing personnel en route to an overseas post is normally the function of the appropriate Headquarters Branch and Desk, but the numbers of new assignees involved here will severely tax normal processing methods. It is not efficient or, really, feasible to attempt to brief over [redacted], individually; particularly in light of the present complement of the [redacted] Desk and the demands already placed on their time. (3) Personnel proceeding to Saigon will become productive and effective members of the Station much sooner if they arrive with some general knowledge of the country, its background and present political dynamics, of the status of the war, the organization of the VC/NLF, the GVN, the US Country Team and the latter's components, of the general lines and objectives of US policy, and of the mission, structure and in a general way, program of the Station of which they will be a part. (4) The need for thorough briefing/orientation prior to arrival in Vietnam is particularly important since few of the persons destined for Vietnam

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will have any significant knowledge or experience of the Far East, let alone Vietnam, and a number will be on more or less directed assignments and hence subject to morale or motivational problems which can easily be compounded if they have any grounds for thinking they are being thrown into their new tasks without a medium of orientation and preparation.

4. During the examination of the briefing outline offered for discussion, it was suggested that during the introductory stage of the briefing program, the steps taken by the Agency to meet its needs in Vietnam be reviewed, including what the Agency as a whole is doing. Since many of the officers being assigned to Vietnam may never have used an interpreter but will do so in Vietnam, it was also suggested that a briefing on this subject be included. There will be many questions on administrative and personal housekeeping chores, i.e., housing, food, clothing, living conditions, recreation, etc.. There should be ample time during the briefing program for covering these questions.

5. The OIR representatives pointed out the need for close direction of the briefing program both in the substantive and administrative details. An area within the Headquarters building is considered the most suitable place for conducting the briefings since the personnel in attendance will have processing and personal chores to take care of also. OIR also suggested that the Vietnam briefing program of other agencies be studied.

6. The group unanimously agreed that a briefing program on Vietnam should be recommended to FE Division, and if this recommendation is adopted, FE and OIR with the assistance of other components concerned should work out the details for an orientation course of five working days duration. It was also agreed that, if possible, the first course should begin on or about 15 November.

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